

THE CORRESPONDENT.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

HUMAN HAPPINESS.

Mr. Editor—That the soul-saving, blessed church of Christ has always been *versus* the peace and happiness of man, none dare deny. To humble man in his own opinion, to sink him in the esteem of others, to vilify and depress the human character, to degrade and confuse the human mind, to sink man below the level of the brute, and render him at once despicable and miserable, has been the heavenly duty and pleasing labour of the Christian doctrine and of its inspired writers and well paid teachers and expositors; as if throwing mud and dirt on a fine painting were the best method of showing the beauties of the piece and enhancing its value. Hence we shall claim something like novelty in only endeavouring to restore mankind to their place in existence.

We need not enquire, neither need we explain, why designing, impudent impostors first begin to deceive and to humble by terrifying man. Their success exceeded their most sanguine expectations, and mankind need no revelation to develope the iniquity of their mystery. Notwithstanding their learning, cunning, for wisdom they have none, their eighteen hundred years preaching, their lo! here, and lo! there, their wonders, sights, miracles, and prayer, we know nothing beyond Nature. Happiness depending on man himself, he requires only a proper education, a due attention to himself, his social and moral duties, a strict adherence to truth, with penetration to foresee, and resolution to shun whatever may militate against his peace and honour. The great Fingal, Ossian's father, and the hero of his truly original poems, gives an advice to his grandson, Oscar, who is worthy a place in any treatise on ethics. "My son," says the sage warrior: "My son, never seek danger, nor shun it when it comes; be discreet, but be valiant in battle." Courage is by no means to be neglected in ethics. Man being a defenceless animal is naturally timid and fearful. Courage is chiefly an artificial quality of the mind, and requires training and stimulus to bring it to perfection. As much of our happiness depends on it, we should appreciate courage as a good; and modest but firm demeanor will ever be indicative of its presence. All our modern writers, who, by the bye, have generally been dogmatic divines, have endeavoured to disrate courage, as well became them, and to banish the article *happiness* from society. The moral slang of the dogmatist has been, that there is no such thing as real happiness on earth; that it is not intended for us here: this world is only a temporary place of probation; we must never think of happiness until we die; and courage with them is a most dreadful eye sore. Hence, when they see three or four people practically belying their doctrine, the shrewd sage divine never fails to put them in mind of death, judgment, hell and eternity. He does not barely insinuate; he tells them in plain language, that they will

be damned eternally for being merry and contented! Strange! unaccountable perversion of good, reason, and the blessings of industry and social habits!

That there is good and evil in the world, is evident. That the good is so much alloyed with evil, is the fault of the priest and his wicked doctrine. Now the duty of man is to acquire as much of the good as he can, and to guard against and shun the evil: and when unforeseen or unavoidable misfortune comes, fortitude will teach him to bear up against it. Sense, reason and knowledge will instruct him to combat and vanquish the enemy of his peace; but no prayer, no reliance on supernatural agency will relieve his distress or ameliorate his condition. I confess that this is almost impossible, according to our present divine and civil laws, which are rather calculated to plunge a man into evil, than to assist him to gain a good.—No man, in the present state of things, has at all times the means of extricating himself from misery, nor of procuring a particle of happiness. Before man's felicity can depend on himself, a great change must take place, and his knowledge must be considerably extended. To effect this, is our first duty; and let us boldly assert, in the face of the hypocritical priest and his degrading, enslaving and soul-saving church and doctrine, that human happiness, which he decries; that earthly happiness, to a point of perfection, is attainable; and that there is no other happiness for man but what he obtains in this world by the virtues of truth, knowledge, and integrity.

Much has been said about man: much more remains to be said. He must be brought forward into a more favourable light than any in which he has yet been exhibited. No "naturally prone to vice, and born to misery, as the sparks fly upward," will do: I say no! he is born as much to virtue and happiness as weight descends downwards, or as light pervades space; and he is defrauded of his birthright by lying, depraved, selfish priests. The man of general knowledge and good intentions, resting on the pivot of his own understanding, and viewing the universe above, beneath, and around him, is a being of infinite sublimity, compared with whatever we can see of material reality in life, or can conceive of spiritual existences. He measures distances impassable, calculates points in the immensity of boundless space, and moves on to infinity in rational conjectures. He weighs the elements in the mass; he estimates the magnitude, solidity, and gravity of worlds; ascertains the velocity and properties of light; arrests the winged thunder, careering through the arch of expansion, and with indescribable powers, corrects even the errors of Nature herself. This is the being whom ignorant, stupid knaves speak of as born in sin, clothed in vice, of a nature too corrupt for worms to feed on, incapable of any thing, himself, walking in darkness, unworthy of mercy, and only fit for the kingdom of heaven after being well washed in the blood of a lamb, and having capacity for faith sufficient to swallow a whale with Jonah in it.

That man is capable of happiness, and calculated to obtain it in a superlative degree, needs no logical proving: it is demonstrated every where in common life; and that he might acquire a greater share of felicity than actually falls to his lot, is also evident. But the soul-savers cannot afford it. Their watch word is, "beware of pleasure; chastise your body for the good of your precious soul; deny yourselves the comforts and blessings of life, that you may enjoy with the greater zest the transcendent blisses of the

saints in paradise. Might they not say with more propriety, torment yourselves without ceasing in this world that ye may not regret leaving it, and that the punishments of hell may not appear new and strange to you when plunged into the gulf of boiling brimstone? However, happiness is not altogether denied to exist, although fanatics cavil about its quantity and quality; and as man is highly capable of both happiness and misery, to acquire and improve the first, to circumvent and destroy the latter, is our duty.

What would make us all happy demands a larger consideration, and as we cannot exactly define what would constitute general happiness, we shall, at least, prove where happiness is not, and record what is incompatible with it. In the first place, it never can be found combined with poverty and ignorance. It never can exist in a state of slavery and dependence. It never can find a resting place under despotic legal tyranny. It never can be found among men who have more to fear of evil than to hope for of good. It flies a country where a small number of men are exalted into lords, rioting in a superabundance extorted from the labour of the residue reduced to a degraded state of slavery and starvation. It never can find footing in a country over-run with superstitions, dogmas, religious sects, absurd, unmeaning, subtle creeds, stupid preachers of enslaving doctrines, divine teachers of incomprehensible nothings, existing every where, unfelt, unseen, unknown, and undefinable by every body. Happiness is excluded by taxes to pay men for bewildering our senses with immaculate conceptions, resurrections from the dead, a kingdom of heaven, to reward knaves, fools, fanatics and impostors, and a hell to punish good, moral sensible men, who will not believe the ravings of such saints as Hohenloe, Johannah Southcote and Richard Brothers, and who dare to think. Where vice triumphs over virtue, and honesty is in continual dread of falling a prey to detestable knavery, happiness cannot exist. Where men, for only differing in opinion from others, are in danger of being destroyed by rapacious bigots; their families turned out of doors destitute, to exist on chance or become a burthen to their friends, there can be no happiness. These circumstances are indicative of a state where neither public nor private happiness can find a refuge. The negative of these circumstances would certainly produce a superior degree of felicity to any thing ever exhibited or described.

Let us look back on the state and condition of man for these three or four thousand years past, as gathered from the annals of the sage historian, the works of the gentle poet, and the ebullitions of the severe and fiery satirist. From these, we shall endeavour to learn what period of time seems most pregnant with human felicity or practical good. The virtues of courage, hospitality, generosity, love of country, fearlessness of danger and death, constancy in friendship and love, seem to have generally existed, in an eminent degree of perfection, in ancient Greece and Rome: and where these are found and encouraged, human happiness must be a general and constant companion. Whether the ancient Pagan, or Heathen or modern Christian world was most favourable to man's social enjoyments or happiness, is a question to which I come with the necessary requisites of candour and impartiality. For I am not one of those who think that all the virtues existed in ancient days only to shame modern times. Nor yet that the moderns are so good as they ought to be, considering the various lessons taught them by sad experience. Nor yet so bad as it is possible that

the sordid principles of religion may make them. No, I am of opinion, that the human intellect was and is the same always. The works of ancient and modern writers prove this. That we have improved in knowledge is certain. That we have not benefited by experience is the fault of religion. And Christianity has much to answer for on this point. For making good men bad, and bad men worse; for keeping back the growth of mind and teaching unhappiness, it stands unrivalled even by the Koran itself. Though, indeed, the mischievous tenets of Mahomedanism are only emanations from the virtues of Christianity. Whether I can make this plain to others, I know not, and care as little; but I feel fully convinced of the truth of it myself, and it appears to me that no man of information can doubt it. Ancient History, though distorted by Christian translators and vile monkish commentators, vouches for a nobleness of sentiment and sublimity of morals, which we look for in vain in the modern world. Their religion, though absurd enough in some of its ceremonies, never degraded man: its principle was to promote happiness: hence feasting, sports, reciting poems, plays, athletic games, feats of strength and activity constituted its body, though the beginning and conclusion commenced and ended with prayer, as head and tail, or prologue and epilogue, to the performance. Their morals taught man to respect himself; to bow to no tyrant; to submit to no imposition; and if he could not live in freedom, he could at least die with the approbation of his fellow-citizens; whilst to live on in slavery and disgrace rendered him despicable.

PHILO.

THE INDIAN'S LETTER.—NO V.

Friend of my bosom, let us leave the Deity to rest under the shadow of his impenetrable secret! All research concerning him and the soul's immortality ends in gloomy doubts and vain conjectures. Let us, therefore, argue and reason about what we know; where we can decide without doubting, and draw conclusions from experience and example. Let us expose to the detestation of mankind, the follies, errors, and crimes of infatuated hypocrites, whose superstition, bigotry, cruelty, and perseverance, in courses of flagrant injustice and oppression, render their name a bye-word; for the cruelty of a priest is become proverbial; his pride, avarice, and duplicity are incontestible marks of his character, and these are in numberless instances heightened by cringing baseness, depraved morals and unutterable bestiality. Their means of injuring society are manifold. Their weapons, the Bible and Testament—the holy and sacred scriptures. The poor man lies naked and defenceless before them, and their usurped power and authority is nearly equal to that of the omnipotent idol which they create, adore, and profane. Religion is their profession, and they say it is for the benefit of man. Let us then, as it is, if not *of* man, at least, *for* him, examine this divine benefit, and see how and how much it contributes to our happiness. Let us come to this question with candour and calmness, and go through the investigation with Indian integrity; keeping truth before our eyes and justice on our right hand.

The three great leaders of the known sects of religions of the present day, are Moses, Jesus, and Mahomed. To these, we might add Zoroaster, Bramah and Foh. All these people, Jesus excepted, have produced books, which their priests say are the word of God. Each of them ho-

nours all the rest with the epithets of impostor, infidel, deceiver, blasphemer, &c. and vouches for his own word of God being the only true one. If we decide in favour of any of these books, which were evidently written for the purpose of abetting impostors to deceive, enslave, and impose on mankind; if *better* can be where all are extremely bad, we would give a decided preference to the book of the Arabian prophet. And candour must allow that it is an approved abridgment of the Jewish Bible and Christian Testament. But it does not appear, that either the daring Arab, or his assistant, Sergius, the apostate monk, were any way acquainted with the Zend-Avesta. As the chimera of the egg is neglected, the Mosaic Cosmogony adopted, the contending powers of light and darkness dispensed with, Ismael and Hagar the Abraham and Sarah of the devout mussulman, and predestination and fatalism the perfection of their religious and civil code. Zoroaster's summum-bonum, had they known it, would have been had in requisition in some shape or other; for all religion, and all priesthood, is contained in the space of a few lines, and forms the peroration to the divine Persian's miraculous code. Listen to the preceptory exhortation of the holy Zoroaster. After recapitulating his precepts, rules and orders he continues: After all these things, still the way to obtain happiness eternal is to sow a field of corn, plant a tree, and get a woman with child; but, performing all these is useless, unless you pay the priest his due!!! Well said, Zoroaster.

But leaving all these absurd religions, false creeds, foolish superstitions, and ridiculous ceremonies out of the case, let us examine the *pure* Christian doctrine, where no falsehood invades, no absurdity appears, no vain, unintelligible cant is found; where every thing is true that the priest says; where charity is unbounded, and the remission of sins, the unalienable property of every true believer in the faith. There a man has something to brag of. A child may be born in sin, brought up in sin, and sin on for sixty or seventy years; he may wallow on through a long life in every vice and wickedness that his frail and foul nature can aid him to accomplish; yet washing in the blood of the lamb makes him as white as snow. Curious effect of lamb's blood? This is not strange we know; blood is a fine thing for taking out stains! This, I suppose, is the reason we have so many reprobate old Christians: as they have bargained for a wash in the lamb's blood, they may wade on through the puddle of guilt as they like, being confident of a purification at a moment's warning.

Nobody will pretend to say, that the Christian doctrine exceeds all others in absurdity; for here, in this hard working country, they excuse many thousand men from all other duty to preach up the truth and simplicity of the Christian doctrine, and pay them annually *twenty million of dollars* for performing this service! These are strong and convincing arguments in favour of Christianity. But they have others far more powerful. They tell you if you do not believe every word the priest says, and all that is printed in his book, that you will be damned to all eternity; and if you pretend to reason or dispute the point with the priests, who are often dull, stupid, proud bigots, they will accuse you of blasphemy, and use all their influence to effect your ruin. This, indeed, if transacted in Turkey, in Persia, in China, or any where else but in this land of freedom, the classic ground of liberty, the glory of the world and envy of surrounding nations,

would be deemed the grand climax of despotic oppression and injustice ; but here it is all fair and right. I have in a former letter, given you an outline of this immaculate religion : what I have not done there I shall here attempt.

It is a common rule with all jugglers to leave off performing and quit the place, as soon as the secret of their art is discovered, or the nature of their tricks understood. The people are no longer pleased ; for their pleasure lay in the deception ; and he who was thought to be a magician or great necromancer, is found out to be but an ignorant clown, whose whole art, impertance, and merit, lay in an impudent, staring countenance, and a few monkey like slight of hand tricks. This is the case with all the legerdemain gangs, except the staunch sons of the church. The juggling priests persist in performing, after the audience are satiated, and continue to play off their stale tricks when most of the spectators are their superiors in the science. The reason is plain ; they are paid for preaching whether the audience attend or not. One day in seven, in honour of their God, they declare war against their devil ; and with long grave faces, in loud and audible voices, repeat a regular set of prayers, sing a set of unmeaning songs, and read a dull, dry lecture, of which nobody recollects a word after he is out of the church door, and which in general, has no application to any thing in human life. This they call performing divine service. Thus they devoutly acknowledge God, one day in seven, and duly and truly serve the devil all the rest of the week.

I have, in this letter, said, that they cry up the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine. As to its being pure, I do not know what they mean by *pure* in this sense ; but as to simple, their religion is any thing but *simple*. The word *simple* means any thing plain, natural, easy to be perceived or understood ; any thing seen at first sight, and comprehended with ease by any capacity. It may admit of elegance, judgment, and refined taste ; be familiar yet pleasing ; common yet chaste ; and though on a level with all capacities, yet above improvement. Such is my definition of the article simplicity. Now, if the Christian creed agrees with this, I am satisfied that the religion is simple. But so different in the case, that the Cretan Labyrinth was a strait passage compared to it, and the romances of Bayardo, Ariosto and the Arabian Tales, more easy of belief than the sacred canons of the Christian church. "I believe (says the apparently devout priest) in one God, never made, who is nothing, yet is three Gods ; who made this world six thousand years ago, and two thousand years after destroyed it and all things in it, except eight persons, being one family, and a pair of all other animals, in a ship called an ark ; that two thousand years after, this triatic God begot himself over again into a son on another man's wife, who was a virgin ; that this son who was God himself, had himself put to death to appease the wrath of his vengeful father, who was himself ; that he was crucified, dead and buried, that he descended into hell ; that he rose again, and ascended into heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of God the father, who is himself ; that he has been coming again for 1800 years, and will come at or about two thousand years from the time of his nativity, to judge the quick and the dead ; that he will take a few up to heaven, of whom I am one, and that he will send all the rest to hell for ever and ever. I believe in the resurrection of this my body, in

propria persona, and that I shall hold conversation with saints and angels through eternity." This is quite simple, you see; is equally pure, and I congratulate him who has powers of belief equal to the task of believing it. The vile impostors, the Mahomedans, will not believe this, and they will be all damned for rejecting such a pure, simple doctrine.

But the pleasantest part is to hear the Christian doctors disputing gravely about the truth, and true meaning of scripture passages. One maintaining that God means this, and the other that he means that by his divine precepts, till they grow into a holy rage and reciprocally damn each other to hell for want of faith and understanding. Hence they are divided into numerous sects, all of which devoutly consign each other to the devil and the wrath of God for ever! From these schisms, we are taught to despise their tenets, to dispute their authority, and to conclude the whole to be a bungling fabrication. It is worth observation how ready, alert, and keen the Christian priests are in detecting the frauds, impostors, and errors of all other religions but their own. They often display great learning, and sometimes science, in bringing to light the dark shades of paganism; in decrying the superstitions of poor unlearned uncivilized Indians. They shew themselves profound when arguing with African Negroes, and scouting the great god Mumbo Jumbo; Jaggernaut falls before them, and even our Kitchimanitoece hides himself in his pure blue sky from their reach. They explain all the fraudulent mysteries of the ancient oracles, and shew, that Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars were bad men and worse kings; that Apollo was the sun, Hercules strength, Minerva wisdom, Juno the air, Cynthia the moon. They prove that the Oaks of Dodona were perforated, and the deceitful lying old priests spake out of them in double meaning, or no meaning verses; that the Druids were a set of ignorant impostors, at once the accusers, judges, and executioners of the people whom they deceived, abused, and blind-folded—granting them life and property just as they pleased. How singular it is that they see all other errors, yet are blind to their own! Were they not the most stupid, or the most vile sots in existence, they must see their own downfall at hand, and endeavour by prudence, to make it easy. But no; they must fall fighting, and the sooner they are overthrown the better.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 3, 1828.

LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

On the Inconsistencies, Absurdities, and Contradictions of the Bible.
By the Secretary.

LECTURE XIV. (Continued from page 223.)

From the 2d chapter of Exodus, it appears that Moses, who by way of distinction is called "a servant of the Lord," commenced the career of his earthly glory by committing a deliberate murder—that he endeavoured to conceal the atrocious deed—and that he was, at last, obliged to fly to save his life. The words of the text are: "And he spied an Egyptian, smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren, and he looked this way and that way; and when he saw there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand."

If this had been the only murder of which Moses was guilty, his character would have descended to posterity much less stained with blood, enormity, and crime, than it has done. As we proceed in our investigation, we shall find it savage, cruel, and ferocious. We shall find that he was the perpetrator of deeds which the most blood-thirsty tyrant has never exceeded.

Some will, perhaps, contend that Moses was justifiable in taking the part of his countryman against the Egyptian, because the latter was smiting the former. But there are no circumstances in the case to warrant an opinion that the contest between the two was any thing more than an ordinary fight, or that Moses was actuated by any other feeling than resentment. This presumption is supported by the manner in which Moses conducted himself. The account states that he looked this way, and that way, to see if there were any witnesses near, who could afterwards testify against him; and when he ascertained that there was no person in view, he fell on the Egyptian and slew him. His guilt is still farther confirmed by his burying him in the sand after he was dead. If the action was righteous, why all these precautions against detection? If it was unrighteous, why did he commit it? Perhaps believers will say, it was at the command of God, seeing they can point out other cases in which God is said to have given commands to Moses, still more wicked and abominable. If the God of the Jews ever issued such mandates, then the God of the Jews is not the God of Nature: he is an abandoned being no better than Moses himself.

In the 3d chapter of Exodus, Moses is introduced to our notice as acting in the capacity of a shepherd to his father-in-law Jethro. While watching his flock he is said to have witnessed a most extraordinary sight—a bush in flames without being consumed. “And the *Angel* of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses! And he said, here am I. And he said draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

Here is a strange confusion of ideas:—first, it is the *Angel* of the Lord that takes his seat in this flaming position—then it appears to be Lord himself. This is similar to the story of Jacob wrestling all night with an angel, whom he discovered to be Jehovah *in propria persona*. Do these inspired writers admit of no difference between angels, and the personage whom they call the Supreme Creator and governor of the Universe? It seems not; and, of course, their views must be very limited as to the perfections of their deity.

But Moses marches up to this burning bush to ascertain why it was not consumed, when it appeared that Jehovah himself was there, and called out for the Legislator. Moses having responded received the mandate of the Most High, which consists in a solemn injunction that the former should pull off his shoes, because the ground on which he stood was holy! A very important command; a sublime revelation, indeed, that God should seat himself in a flaming bush for the useless and senseless purpose of telling a man to pull off his shoes!

In the last verse of this chapter, we find Jehovah directing his chosen people to rob the Egyptians of their property under the specious pretence of *borrowing*:

“Every woman (says the text) shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.” How far such proceedings and directions are consistent with the principles of immutable justice, I leave it to the Christians themselves to explain.

In the 7th chapter of Exodus, verse 3d, God is represented as saying, “And I will *harden* Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.” Now, of what good was it to multiply these signs and wonders, when the same power by which they were wrought, was exerted in hardening Pharaoh’s heart in such a manner that the wonders could not produce any effect? It was, in fact, making God the author of all the crimes resulting from such hardness; it was charging the wicked actions of man on a being of the utmost purity and perfection. It is astonishing that those friends of revealed religion, who pretend to be the only true friends of God, and who also believe that God is a friend to none but themselves, should set up a system of morality, with external purity proclaimed on the face of the record, while every thing essentially contained in this system places deity in a state of acrimonious hostility against morals, truth, and philosophy. The authors of the first five books of the bible have created a monster—formed on the model of their own passions—partaking of their own vices—enlisted in their own quarrels—and no better than themselves.

It is impossible for any man to examine with attention this book, and not perceive in the character of the Jewish God, numerous and glaring imperfections—and, in many cases, the most complete and absolute impotence. The chosen people of Jehovah were under the tyranny of the Egyptian king. Moses and his God united their strength and ingenuity for the emancipation of this favoured race. But Pharaoh opposed their designs; and having his heart often hardened, either by the God of the Jews, or from his own choice, he seemed to triumph over the numerous efforts which the chosen band made to effect their escape! Is it not extraordinary that any one can be so stupidly ignorant of that being who is believed to have called the Universe into existence, as to imagine that the God of the Jews is a real, and not a fictitious being. What are all the kings and tyrants of the world when placed in the balance of Supreme Wisdom, and the infinite perfections of Deity? Superstition may play off her delusive tricks on mankind, and triumph a little longer amidst prevailing ignorance—But the period rapidly approaches, when the conjurations of the imaginary Moses, and the scandalous descriptions of his God, will be prostrated before the throne of Reason, and remain forever in a state of silence and contempt.

The 8th chapter of Exodus opens with an extraordinary account of frogs, which were sent by Jehovah to invade the Egyptian king, and infest the habitations of his subjects. The account is as follows:—“And if thou refuse to let my people go, behold I will unite all thy borders with frogs. And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the

house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneeding troughs." This is one effort of the Jewish divinity to frighten Pharaoh into his duty. But it did not answer the purpose: the Egyptian king remained inflexible and obstinate in holding the "chosen favourites" in bondage. We may well ask why God sent such a vast number of frogs when he knew it would promote no useful purpose? Is it consistent with infinite wisdom to employ those means only to accomplish his purposes which must necessarily produce a failure? This frog miracle, said to have been performed by Aaron through the assistance of God, was imitated and equalled by the magicians of the country, for they also brought up frogs. It is rather singular that Jehovah should be placed in competition with a set of Egyptian conjurers, and that the latter should, in so many instances, exhibit their miraculous operations in a manner equal to the Jewish God himself.

When this wonderful miracle of the frogs had passed away, it seems that Pharaoh relapsed into a state of hard-heartedness for which he was so remarkable. But is it any way surprising that this monarch should have been so hardened, when God himself undertook to, and actually did render his moral sensibility obdurate?

The next brilliant effort of Jehovah, for the emancipation of his chosen people, is the manufacturing of a greater number of *lice* than ever was heard of in any other part of the world, or in all the world beside. It is said (verse 16 and 17) that "all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt!" Can such an extravagant, foolish, uninteresting story be considered as a divine revelation? Such representations ought to be held in contempt by all who have any regard for correct principles. But here, it is said, by believers, the power of God was manifest, as the magicians failed in their efforts to bring forth lice. This, however, was evidently owing to the want of materials out of which to make them; for Aaron and the Jewish conjurers had used all the dust of the land in their lousy manufactory. But, even laying this aside, and taking the account as it stands, it can only be said that Aaron was the most dextrous juggler, and played off a better game of deception than his competitors.

In the 4th chapter of Exodus, we find Moses about to commence his career of "conjuring glory"—in which, however, notwithstanding the assistance of Jehovah, he does not appear to triumph much over the profane conjurers of antiquity; while some of modern times have certainly surpassed him. If Moses were here now with his rod and his serpent, I am certain it would be no difficult matter to find more than one individual, who, without any pretensions to divine assistance, would bear the laurel away from him. I myself have witnessed tricks of deception, and I dare say, many of you have also been eye witnesses of them, that appeared as wonderful and extraordinary as those said to have been exhibited by Moses; but which, *when explained*, had nothing remarkable in them; the success of the performance being altogether owing to the dexterity, or superior slight of hand of the exhibitor.

If then, men of the present day can perform as great wonders as those attributed to Moses, and these too by human art and ingenuity, why should a supernatural power be resorted to for the purpose of extricating the Jewish conjuror from his difficulties? Those who are such strenuous advocates

for miracles, and believe that they form an undeniable proof in favour of the divinity of the scriptures, ought first to compare the two kinds of conjurors—those who pretend to be divine, and those who operate by mere human ingenuity—To bring a full fledged bird out of a fresh egg, is as great a miracle as to turn a rod into a serpent; yet the former has been witnessed—at least to the view of the audience such appeared to be the fact.—If the enlightened people of this age and country can be thus deceived, why should we form any better opinion of the Hebrews, and the Egyptians? They were not so well informed—they were more superstitious; and, of course were subject to greater impositions than we are.

There is a circumstance mentioned in the 24th verse of this chapter which is really laughable, and which, of itself, is sufficient to overthrow the pretended divinity of the whole system—God is said to have met Moses at a tavern; and from the manner in which the story is told, we must conclude that they had a serious quarrel together. The words are these—“And it came pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him.” Now the word *sought*, implies efforts without success. Whether the Lord chased Moses up and down through the several rooms of the tavern, or that Moses was an even match for the Lord, is what I shall not pretend to say. But one thing seems very plain, that such a degrading scandalous description of the character and conduct of deity, must subvert the supposed truth and divinity of any book whatever—Is the opinion entertained by Christians no more exalted than to imagine that their God frequents taverns or public places, with a design to kill some one of the creatures of his power, when, if he choose, he could crush the whole to atoms in a single moment? Such is the fact in the present case. Let those who reverence the bible, and despise reason, read this story and blush, if they can blush at any thing, for having so long prostituted their faculties as to give credit to such a mass of romances.

New York Observer.—Our readers will recollect that in our number for 29th December last, we detected the religious paper, published in this city, called the *New York Observer*, in promulgating a malicious fabrication respecting the “Free Press Association,” and called on the conductors of that *pious* journal to give up the name of the author of this calumny of which, if they refused, we should regard them as the sole inventors. Instead of justifying their pretensions to impartiality, by furnishing the name of the traducer, the *Observer*, evidently smarting under the odium of having been so clearly detected in a falsehood, has ever since been actively engaged in pouring out the most acrimonious ebullitions on all who profess liberal principles, and particularly on that body against which it commenced its unprovoked, unfounded, and unjustifiable vituperations. Aware that these paroxysms proceeded from *ignorance*, and accustomed to be denounced by the unmeaning appellations of Atheists, Infidels, enemies to God, and children of the devil, the furious attacks of the writers in the *Observer* excited no other feelings in our breast than compassion for these benighted individuals, and a more earnest desire to dissipate the errors with which their minds are imbued, and which alone have been the cause of their entertaining so unfounded ideas of our objects, and such uncharitable views as to our future destiny.

With antagonists who estimate *truth* as paramount to all other considerations; who esteem it honorable to retract an error when it is fairly pointed out to them, we shall always be found ready to enter the lists. But when men wanton in calumny and abuse—when they substitute terms of reproach—terms used for no other purpose than to enlist the worst passions of humanity—for fair, temperate argument;—with such men it would be a waste of time, and an insult to the understandings of rational men, to attempt to carry on a contest. If, however, the conductors of the *New York Observer*, or of any other religious journal, who tread in its footsteps, will return to *first principles*, and consent to investigate, coolly and calmly, the *truth* of their system—the *evidence*, which, they pretend to say, establishes its divine origin—we shall readily join issue with them in the enquiry; for it is of no use to agitate discussion as to parts of a system, when the *entire system itself is liable to be disputed*. The advocates of Christianity always take it for granted, that there once existed a person of the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and that the history of him in the new testament books is an authentic history, emanating from God himself. Now both these propositions we consider unfounded, and are prepared to offer such reasons for our incredulity as, we feel confident, will convince any man whose mind is freed from the prejudices of education, and properly estimates the value of evidence, that the assertions of our opponents, even at this late hour, are not entitled to all the credit that they wish. If it is true that, about eighteen hundred years ago, there was actually in being a person answering the description given of him in the gospel, it is an easy matter for those who maintain this to *prove* the fact. But if they shrink from the investigation, and load those with abuse who entertain doubts on the subject, they virtually acknowledge the badness of their cause.

Progress of Liberal Principles.—We have been favoured with the perusal of a few numbers of a new periodical work, commenced in January last in London, by Mr. Richard Carlile, entitled "*The Lion*," by which we rejoice to learn that liberal principles are advancing with a rapidity in Great Britain that defies all the attempts of fanaticism to impede. The following extract, which we give as a specimen of the work, we recommend to the careful perusal of the conductors of the *New York Observer*. If, after this, they again assert that "the race of these men is short livid," we shall be at no loss to appreciate their true motives:

RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS OF THE ANGLO SCOTCH PRESBYTERY.

A long, very long, pastoral letter has been printed and dispersed by this Presbytery, with an apparent mixture of desire and hopelessness of reaching and recalling the dispersed baptized of the kirk, residing in and about London. It is stated, with much of priestly and religious affliction, that, though the number of Scotch residents, who, as infants, and not knowing right from wrong, were baptized in the kirk, be one hundred thousand; now, having reached manhood, not one thousand, not one in a hundred, continue their communications with the kirk! It is further explained, by way of contrast, that, within the memory of some of the "*reverend fathers of the presbytery*," the Scotch residents of London have increased four-fold, and that the Scotch churches and the attendants on those churches have

diminished by more than a half; thus stating the increase of the number of Scotch Infidels in London within fifty years, as eight, nine, or ten to one. Care is taken to state, that these strayers from the fold have not strayed into other religions folds; but that they have strayed away from all religious folds! The reverend Robert Taylor, who stands like the one lost or strayed sheep from the Episcopal Clergy of the Church of England, cracks his joke upon this lamentation of the Scotch Presbytery, and says, that they have lost the ninety-nine out of the hundred, and have with difficulty kept the one in the fold! They had better now let out the remaining one, and turn the kirk or fold to some more useful and more agreeable purpose.

To the honour of infidelity, the confession and lamentation of the Presbytery, states, that all this straying of the Scotch from Auld Kirk is solely attributable to their intellectual improvement: that their religion flourished best with their ignorance; but that as they become men of letters, arts, sciences, and political economy, they abandon religion, and religious institutions! We thank the Anglo-Scotch Presbytery for this confession, and we admire its frankness, its truth, and its honesty. That such is the real bearing of the case, is well known to us infidels, and such must become the final and universal admission of all the churches.

In the face of this confession of the Presbytery, that their religion is not well founded, since it has flourished only among ignorant men, and since it is by their own showing, rejected by men of talent, by all who study the arts and sciences, by all who study literature and political economy, how can they call it their duty to put forth this pastoral admonition and complaint? Or if it be a religious duty, can it be also an honest duty? After such a damning fact admitted, that all that are respectable in talent of the Scottish nation, have thrown aside the religion of their more ignorant fathers, what hope can this Presbytery have, what honesty, what reward can be expected, in thus proclaiming and complaining of the failure of the Kirk? Is it to be preserved, because it is two hundred years old? Then give us the Roman Catholic Christian, or the Pagan religion, with its higher pretensions to antiquity. Why persist in preaching an absurd fable to those who know it to be a fable, and, of whom, it is admitted, that they reject it, because it is a fable? because they have acquired knowledge enough to know that it is not well founded? Are the profits of error, thus to continue to arraign the honesty and the improvement of mankind? Are priests, useless, mischievous priests, thus to continue to prey upon any small portion of the human race, which, like spiders with their webs to entrap a fly, they can entrap and entangle in their meshes and senseless mysteries? No! It cannot be much longer so. And this confession of the Anglo-Scotch Presbytery is but the prelude to a general admission of the Christian priests, that their posts are no longer tenable.

MISCELLANEOUS.

St. Macarius.—Alban Butler says he was a confectioner of Alexandria, who, in the flower of his age, spent upwards of sixty years in the deserts

in labour, penance, and contemplation. "Our saint," says Butler, "happened one day inadvertently to kill a gnat, that was biting him in his cell; reflecting that he had lost the opportunity of suffering that mortification, he hastened from his cell for the marshes of Scete, which abound with great flies, whose stings pierce even wild boars. There he continued six months, exposed to those ravaging insects; and to such a degree was his whole body disfigured by them, with sores and swellings, that when he returned he was only to be known by his voice." The Golden Legend relates of him, that he took a dead Pagan out of his sepulchre, and put him under his head for a pillow; whereupon certain devils came to affright the saint, and called the dead Pagan to go with them; but the body under the saint said he could not, because a pilgrim lay upon him, so that he could not move; then Macarius, nothing afraid, beat the body with his fist, and told him to go if he would, which caused the devils to declare that Macarius had vanquished them. Another time the devil came with a great scythe on his shoulder, to smite the saint, but he could not prevail against him, on account of his virtues. Macarius, at another time, being tempted, filled a sack with stones, and bore it many journeys through the desert. Seeing a devil before him in the shape of a man, dressed like "a herawde," with his clothing full of holes, and in every hole a phial, he demanded of this devil whither he went; and why he had so many phials? The devil answered to give drink to the hermits; and that the phials contained a variety of liquors, that they might have a choice, and so fall into temptation. On the devil's return, the saint inquired how he had sped; and the devil answered very evil, for they were so holy that only one Theodistus would drink; on this information Macarius found Theodistus under the influences of the phial, and recovered him. Macarius found the head of a Pagan, and asked where the soul of its body was: in hell, said the head: he asked the head if hell was deep;—the head said deeper than from heaven to earth: he demanded again, if there were any there lower than his own soul—the head said the Jews were lower than he was: the saint inquired if there were any lower than the Jews—the head answered, the false Christian-men were lower than the Jews, and more tormented: there the dialogue between the saint and the head appears to have ended. Macarius seems, by the Golden Legend, to have been much annoyed by the devil. In a nine days' journey through a desert, at the end of every mile he set up a reed in the earth, to mark his track against he returned; but the devil pulled them all up, made a bundle of them, and placed them at Macarius's head, while he lay asleep, so that the saint with great difficulty found his way home again.

Adoration.—Is it not a great fault in some modern languages, that the same word which is used in addressing the Supreme Being, is also used in addressing a mistress? We not unfrequently go from hearing a sermon, in which the preacher has talked of nothing but *adoring* God in spirit and in truth, to the theatre, where nothing is to be heard but *the charming object of my adoration*, &c. The Greeks and Romans, at least did not fall into this extravagance. Horace does not say that he *adores* Lalage; Tibullus does not *adore* Delia; nor is even the term *adoration* to be found in Patro-nius. If any thing can excuse this, it is the frequent mention which is made in our operas and songs of the gods of ancient fable. Poets have said that

their mistresses were more adorable than these false divinities ; for which no one can blame them. We have insensibly become familiarized with this mode of expression, until at last, without any perception of the folly, the God of the universe is addressed in the same terms as an opera-singer.

Singing.—Throughout the East, songs, dances, and torches, formed part of the ceremonies essential in all sacred feasts. No sacerdotal institution existed among the Greeks without songs and dances. The Hebrews borrowed this custom from their neighbours ; for David *sung and danced before the ark*. St. Matthew speaks of a canticle sung by Jesus, and by his apostles, after their passover. This canticle, which is not admitted into the authorized books, is to be found in fragments in the 237th letter of St Augustin to Bishop Chretius ; and, whatever disputes there may have been about its authenticity, it is certain that singing was employed in all religious ceremonies. Mahomed found this a settled mode of worship among the Arabs ; it is also established in India ; but it does not appear to be in use among the lettered men of China.

Adam.—The pious Madame de Bourinon was sure that Adam was an hermaphrodite, like the first men of the divine Plato. God had revealed a great secret to her ; but as I have not had the same revelation, I shall say nothing of the matter. The Jewish Rabbis have read Adam's books, and know the names of his preceptor and his second wife ; but as I have not read our first parent's books, I shall remain silent. Some acute and very learned persons are quite astonished when they read the *Veidam* of the ancient Brahmins, to find that the first man was created in India, and called *Adimo*, which signifies *the begetter*, and his wife *Procriti*, signifying *life*. They say that the sect of the Brahmins is incontestably more ancient than that of the Jews ; that it was not until a late period that the Jews could write in the Canaanitish language, since it was not until late that they established themselves in the little country of Canaan. They say that the Indians were always inventors, and the Jews always imitators ; the Indians always ingenious, and the Jews always rude. They say it is very hard to believe that Adam, who was fair and had hair on his head, was father to the Negroes, who are entirely black, and have black wool. What, indeed, do they not say ?

Origin of Evil.—It is as difficult to know at what time the Book of Genesis which speaks, of Adam, was written, as it is to know the date of the *Veidam*, of the Shanscrit, or any other of the ancient Asiatic books. It is important to remark, that the Jews were not permitted to read the first chapter of Genesis before they were twenty-five years old. Many rabbis have regarded the formation of Adam and Eve and their adventure as an allegory. Every celebrated nation of antiquity has imagined some similar one ; and by a singular coincidence, which marks the weakness of our nature, all have endeavoured to explain the origin of moral and physical evil by ideas nearly alike. The Chaldeans, the Indians, the Persians, and the Egyptians, have accounted, in similar ways, for that mixture of good and evil which seems to be a necessary appendage to our globe.

Arguments proving that the Christian Religion ruins all those States where it is the Established Religion.

Abridged from a work translated from the French, and first published in 1698.

Continued from page 224.

ARTICLE IX. Relates to the sums which the Pope, being a foreign power, draws from France every year, under different denominations, as—annates, bulls, dispensations, indulgencies, relics, provisions, *Agnus Dei*, and consecrations of prelates, dedications of churches, jubilees now and then, both in France and at Rome, &c.; the money drained out of the kingdom by this means amounts to divers millions annually. M. de Sully, superintendent of the finances under Henry the IVth, having well examined the matter, found that, in that time, the Pope got every year, one with another, about four million of livres from France; and since that time it has, at least, doubled, but we will suppose it were only six millions of livres per annum.

ARTICLE X. Is concerning the great sums which the cardinals, protectors of France, and divers other prelates, who are pensioners of France, besides the Knights of Malta, &c. draw yearly out of the kingdom, by benefices which they possess in it. This amounts also to several millions yearly.

ARTICLE XI. Relates to the tapers, wax candles, and oil, that are spent in their foolish superstitions; as burning them before images, statues, hosts, and at funerals, &c. which formerly cost the kingdom of France, perhaps, eight or ten millions per annum; the greatest part of the wax being imported from other countries; and for that which is the product of France, it must also be reckoned, because it is as unprofitably spent as if they should take the wine and brandy, which are articles of merchandise, and pour them out upon the ground. I do not reckon here the incense, which they burn to little purpose, because that is no great matter, and it is grateful to the smell; neither do I take notice of the ornaments and raiment of their statues, images, and other idols, because they last long; nor of their mysterious vestments, adorned with fine lace, of linen, silver or gold, or gold fringes or embroidery, with which their priests are decked, like the priests of the Jews, when they perform what they call divine service. Nor do I take notice of the great quantity of wine, which is spent in their multitude of masses daily, because it nourishes those who drink it; nor yet of their wafers or consecrated hosts that they keep, though it be so much flour lost. So that I content myself here to reckon only the loss of their tapers and oil, which I do verily believe, including their loss of time in making or lighting their candles, and cleaning and lighting their lamps, amount to eight or ten millions per annum.

To be continued.

Free Press Association.—The regular monthly meeting of the "Free Press Association," will be held in the Lecture Room on Sunday (to-morrow) the 5th inst. at 11 o'clock forenoon.

In the afternoon, a Theological Lecture will be delivered at 3 o'clock.